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ABSTRACT

This newsletter is devoted to identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate and to improve the life chances of young children living in poverty. The Spring 1998 issue includes articles on state investments to enhance the well-being of young children and families, and child poverty rates in a booming U.S. economy. The Summer/Fall 1998 issue focuses on low-income fathers, with articles on welfare law changes, the changing role of low-income fathers, and welfare recipients' views of welfare reform. Regular features of the periodical include the "Policy Point of View," descriptions of recent noteworthy publications, and news from the Center for Children in Poverty. Contains a list of publications. (KB)

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News & Issues
1998

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SPRING 1998 Vol. 8, No. 1

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Study on State Investments Finds Good and Bad News for Young Children

A new report from NCCP, *Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families*, highlights, more than ever, what a difference a state makes for a young child's chances in life. The report, written by NCCP deputy director Jane Knitzer and Stephen Page, finds significant inequality in what individual states are doing to promote the well-being of young children and families. At the same time, very few states are linking comprehensive programs to help children with revamped welfare programs that aim to help their parents become self-sufficient.

The findings suggest a pattern of both good and not so good news. On the positive side, *Map and Track '98*—building on NCCP's 1996 report—

NCCP Update finds Child Poverty Persists Despite Strong U.S. Economy

see page 3

documents an increase in states funding programs for infants and toddlers, up from 18 in 1996 to 24 in 1998. This is an important finding in view of dramatic evidence that early brain development has a major impact on how well children do later on, not

State-by-state strategic approaches for enhancing the well-being of young children and families

States funding comprehensive initiatives that combine high-level leadership, integrated program and community mobilization approaches, continued commitment to increased funding, and a framework for state action [8]

States funding only comprehensive programs [18]

States funding both community mobilization strategies and comprehensive programs [17]

States not funding any comprehensive programs [7]

P States funding only pilot programs [3]

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Columbia School of Public Health

Identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate, and to improve the life chances of the millions of young children still living in poverty

just academically, but socially. It also documents increased investments in comprehensive programs for preschool-aged children across the states that have already made a commitment to this age group (although no new states reported investing in preschool programs since 1996). And, it reflects growing recognition that focusing attention on young children and families is a community responsibility.

In 1998, 27 states report initiating community mobilization strategies focused either on young children, or on all children. Moreover, beyond the numbers are the report's findings that states are showing great creativity in program design, providing a resource to those designing policies and programs in other states.

Inequities Persist Across States

At the same time, the report also reveals a pattern of troubling inequities. Where young children live makes a difference in what services and supports are available to them and their families. Infants and toddlers growing up in one of the 26 states that has no statewide initiatives on their behalf or preschoolers growing up in one of the 16 states that has not made any commitment to programs serving three- and four-year-olds are at a disadvantage. So, too, are young children living in states where state investments are not sufficient to support efforts in all parts of the state.

In fact, in most states, overall levels of funding for comprehensive programs are relatively low; half of the states report spending under $10 million for comprehensive programs for young children and families, even at a time when most states have budget surpluses. In some instances, differences across states are startling. For example, Ohio reports spending close to $250 million on young children and families; the state of Pennsylvania, which has a similar population, reports spending just over $2 million. Unlike Ohio, it reports no statewide prekindergarten program, does not supplement Head Start, and invests little in family resource centers.

Federal and state governments are shuffling the deck of policies. It's a critical time to ensure that young children are dealt a fair hand.

Also of concern is the fact that only 10 states reported deliberate efforts to ensure that specific attention is focused on connecting young children affected by welfare changes to comprehensive programs. This low number may reflect that states, at the time the data were collected, were still trying to make the basic decisions required by the 1996 federal welfare law. Yet clearly, the findings suggest that much more attention needs to be focused on helping low-income families ensure that their children have more opportunities to succeed, even as they meet new work requirements.

Leadership is Lacking

Perhaps most dramatic is the continued variation in the level of policy leadership and commitment to young children and families. Eight states—Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and West Virginia—the same states as in 1996, give evidence of high-level leadership, steady investment of resources—sometimes across administrations—and persistent efforts to make the well-being of young children and families everybody's business. In contrast, seven states—Alabama, Idaho, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming—have not yet made investments in comprehensive programs on a statewide basis (although Alabama and Nebraska do have pilot efforts). In the other 35 states, leadership and investments are uneven. Most of these states lack a coherent framework for action to galvanize communities and ensure that what happens to young children and families is a high state priority.

The report also provides state-by-state indicators of the well-being of young children and families, as well as data related to access to basic services. Here too, variation is startling. For example, young children in California are almost nine times as likely as those in Alaska to have parents who did not finish high school (26% versus 3%); young children in Nevada's low-income families are more than six times as likely to lack health insurance as such children in Vermont. West Virginia has made a major effort across administrations to use its limited resources strategically to benefit the 40 percent of its young children living in poverty; while South Dakota reports no state initiatives for the 22 percent of its young citizens living in poor families.

States Must Do More

Map and Track challenges leaders across the states to act today to build on what the most pioneering states have done, and, at the same time to pay close attention to the undercurrent of inequities that do not bode well for America's youngest children and families. As J. Lawrence Aber, NCCP's director, has noted: "The federal and state governments are shuffling the deck, as new policies for child care, health care, and welfare reform are being considered. It's a critical time to ensure that all young children are dealt a fair hand. This report makes it clear that states can and must do more to promote the healthy development of America's young children."

In 2000, NCCP will update the current edition and provide a new picture of the implications for young children of the transfer of federal responsibility to the states in key policy areas, and in some instances, from states to communities. ■

National Center for Children in Poverty

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J. Lawrence Aber *Director*
Jane Knitzer *Deputy Director for Program and Policy Analysis*
Carole Oshinsky *Managing Editor*

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Child Poverty Rates Remain High Despite Booming U.S. Economy

The Center's annual report on poverty, *Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update, March 1998 Edition*, reveals that while the American economy is booming, millions of America's youngest children remain poor. Based on NCCP's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, in 1996, 5.5 million children under age six were living in poverty—nearly one in four—a decline from the peak of 6.4 million in 1993. The official poverty rate for young children—23 percent—is more than double the rate of poverty among the elderly and among adults ages 18–64 (both were 11 percent in 1996).

The U.S. young child poverty rate (YCPR) remains the highest among Western industrialized nations. At the same time, the percentage of poor young children with employed parents (63 percent) has increased dramatically—16 percent between 1993 and 1996. "Decades of experience teach us that we cannot rely on economic growth alone to overcome young child poverty," said J. Lawrence Aber, the Center's director. "Our study found that many working families with young children are still struggling to escape poverty. And young child poverty is affecting children of all races and ethnic backgrounds across the country, in suburban and rural communities as well as in urban ones."

Policy Can Make a Difference

For the first time, the report uses an alternative measure of poverty to show that government programs and policies can be powerful tools to lift children out of poverty. (See chart.) The alternative measure for the study, which updates NCCP's landmark 1996 report, *One in Four: America's Youngest Poor*, includes the value of food stamps, housing subsidies, school lunch benefits, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). It also subtracts federal, state, and payroll taxes. Using this alternative poverty measure reveals that the EITC has had a significant impact on driving down young child poverty rates. Without the EITC, the 1996 YCPR would have been 23 percent higher. "Our findings clearly demonstrate how the right policies can make a difference," said Dr. Aber. In contrast, the report found no substantial evidence that state welfare reform efforts contributed to lowering the young child poverty rate from 1993–1996, a period during which 43 states made significant welfare changes.

Defying Stereotypes

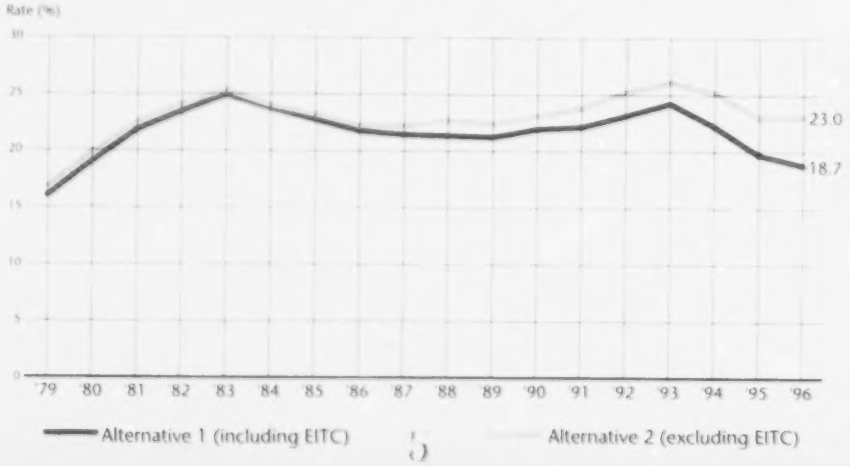
The report also analyzes why so many young children continue to live in poor families. Prime factors include single parenthood, low educational attainment, part-time or no employment, and low wages. Young children living in mother-only families continued to be particularly vulnerable to the risk of poverty. While over one-third of these children (2.2 million) experienced poverty if their mothers were employed only part time, those with single mothers working full time still had poverty rates nearly three times as high as those in "traditional" two-parent families—those with father employed full time and mother not working (17 percent compared to 6 percent).

The new report challenges conventional wisdom characterizing the 10 million children living in low-income families (i.e., living in families with incomes below 185 percent of the poverty line). For example, in 1996:

- poverty and near poverty affected almost half of all young children (43 percent);
- more than half (58 percent) of all poor young children lived in suburban or rural areas;
- non-Hispanic whites made up the largest racial or ethnic group of young poor children; and
- poverty levels in "traditional" two-parent families nearly doubled in the last two decades.

This report, prepared by NCCP researchers Jiali Li and Neil Bennett, is part of a continuing series of publications aimed at stimulating a national dialogue about young child poverty and how to prevent it. NCCP studies to be issued in the near future will update state young child poverty rates and use alternative measures of poverty developed by the Center to show how state-level policies can help lift families out of poverty. ■

A comparison of poverty rates for children under age six using alternative measures of poverty with and without the EITC, 1979–1996



POLICY POINT OF VIEW

Making Welfare Reform Work for Our Youngest Children

by Greg J. Duncan and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

In 1996, some 14.5 million children lived in families in which total income failed to exceed even the spartan thresholds (e.g., $12,516 for a family of three) used to define poverty. The poverty rate among U.S. children under age 18 (20.5 percent) is nearly one-third higher than it was 25 years ago and 1.5 to four times as high as the child poverty rates in Canada and Western Europe. In 1996 the young child poverty rate (YCPR) was even higher—23.2 percent for children under age six—affecting 5.5 million children.

What implications do these alarming poverty figures have for America's children? There is little doubt that children raised in poverty have more difficult childhoods. And countless studies have demonstrated correlations between child poverty and various measures of children's achievement, health, and behavior.

photo by Jim Zo

Dr. Duncan is Professor of Education and Social Policy and Faculty Fellow, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University. He is also Deputy Director, Northwestern University/University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research. He headed the Panel Study of Income Dynamics for 13 years. His recent books include Consequences of Growing Up Poor *co-edited with Dr. Brooks-Gunn and* Neighborhood Poverty: Context and Consequences for Children, *co-edited with J. Lawrence Aber and Dr. Brooks-Gunn.*

photo by Mary Steinitz

Dr. Brooks-Gunn is Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Child and Parent Development and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University and co-project director, Child and Family Policy Institute, Columbia University. Among her many publications are Escape from Poverty: What Makes a Difference for Children *and* Adolescent Mothers in Later Life. Policy Point of View *is presented to initiate dialogue on important issues that concern poor young children and their families.* *For NCCP's response to this article, see page 5.*

Poor Children Tend to Have Poorer Outcomes

The strength and consistency of these associations is striking. For example: The risk of poor children relative to nonpoor children is

- 6.8 times for reported child abuse and neglect;
- 3.5 times for lead poisoning;
- 2.2 times for experiencing violent crime;
- 2.0 times for grade repetition and dropping out of high school;
- 1.7 times for a low birthweight birth; and
- 1.7 times for child mortality.

More detailed research suggests that with some crucial exceptions, most of the effects of family income are smaller than suggested by these associations. A first noteworthy point is the importance of the type of outcome being considered. Family income appears to have larger effects on children's ability and achievement than on behavior, mental health, or physical well-being. Second, the childhood stage in which poverty occurs matters. Family economic conditions in early childhood appear to be far more important for shaping ability and achievement than are economic conditions during middle childhood and adolescence.

And third, income changes for low-income families—such as those associated with movements from deep to shallow poverty or across the poverty line itself—appear to have more powerful effects on children's development than income increases for middle-class or affluent families. In short, episodes of deep poverty early in childhood appear most detrimental to children's cognitive development.

The extent and effects of poverty among U.S. children in the future will depend greatly on the impact of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act, which was signed by President Clinton on August 22, 1996. Ending six decades of guaranteed government aid for economically deprived children, this law eliminated the open-ended federal entitlement program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in favor of providing block grants to states to be used for time-limited cash assistance replacement programs (TANF or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

Too Early to Judge Reforms

The 1996 legislation introduced two provisions linked to the length of welfare receipt. First, after 24 months of receiving welfare benefits, recipients are required to participate in "allowable work activities" or else face sanctions or penalties. Second, recipients are limited to 60 months of total welfare receipt (whether or not consecutive), regardless of work effort. States are allowed to impose shorter time limits and nearly half of the states have already opted to do so. States are also permitted to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseloads from the lifetime limits for reasons of hardship.

Early returns on the new state-designed welfare reforms appear to be stunningly positive. Caseloads have fallen by roughly 25 percent since 1994, and by as much as 80 percent in some counties in Wisconsin. Although some optimism is warranted, research suggests that much

of the euphoria over welfare reform is unfounded, and that states should prepare for almost half of their welfare families to hit the 60-month benefit cutoff within eight years of TANF implementation. We must temper our enthusiasm by remembering that we are presently in a major boom economy, and that the dynamics of welfare caseloads will certainly change if the economy sours and we enter a new recession.

Welfare Sanctions Most Worrisome

The most worrisome provisions of the welfare reform legislation are sanctions for noncompliant behavior by parents and categorical restrictions on eligibility that drop cash assistance to zero. Time limits, especially in states that opt for a five-year limit, are not as likely as sanctions to affect families with young children unless additional children are born during the period of welfare receipt. Families with very young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of sanctions because: (1) young children are the most vulnerable age group to the consequences of deep poverty; and (2) mothers with very young children are least able to support themselves through work in the labor market.

What is likely to happen to sanctioned families? Some families hitting time limits or losing benefits when sanctioned for not following program rules will replace the lost welfare payments with income from work and other sources; others, perhaps as many as half, will see their incomes fall well below the poverty line. State-specific provisions that deny cash assistance to children born to underage, unmarried women will also lower dramatically the incomes of a subset of affected families.

Iowa's state welfare reform illustrates the possible impact of sanctions. Beginning in 1993, welfare recipients in Iowa were required to help formulate and then follow a "Family Investment Agreement." Failure to comply led to a series of sanctions, including a six-month cutoff from all cash benefits. A follow-up study of sanctioned families found an almost equal split between those working immediately after the cash benefits were terminated and those not working. Nearly half of those sanctioned enjoyed monthly income increases averaging $500, but fully half suffered drops in their families' monthly income that averaged nearly $400.

Focus on Most Vulnerable—Young Children

Research on the effects of poverty on child development suggests that rates of poverty among children—especially deep poverty occurring early in childhood—are crucial indicators to track. Policy attention should focus first and foremost on alleviating such poverty.

An obvious recommendation is that states consider exempting families with young children from the adverse effects of time limits, sanctions and categorical restrictions. A minority of states currently exempt mothers of very young children from various provisions of their welfare programs, but in almost no case does the exemption extend beyond the child's first birthday; in some cases it holds only until the child is three months old. States without exemptions should consider granting them, and all states should consider extending the exemption to a child's second or third birthday.

More broadly-targeted programs, such as a child allowance, child care subsidies, or refundable tax credits should be geared to children's ages. Concentrating efforts to enhance incomes on those families with the greatest economic need—families with young children—both lowers program costs and improves their power to promote healthy child development. ■

NCCP'S VIEW... *Making Welfare Reform Work for Our Youngest Children*

NCCP agrees with Dr. Duncan's and Brooks-Gunn's reading of the research: extreme poverty in early childhood has especially deleterious effects on children's development and future life chances. Consequently, their suggestion that policy focus first and foremost on alleviating deep poverty occurring early in childhood makes great sense.

But what about the millions of families who are not in extreme poverty but are struggling to make financial ends meet? Gearing programs such as child care subsidies and refundable tax credits to very poor families with very young children more narrowly targets resources and so lowers program costs (as the authors point out), but it also overlooks the needs of many low-income working families and shrinks the constituencies for these programs. Historically, access to child care subsidies often was restricted to welfare recipients, causing a sense of resentment among the working poor and a serious inequity in how the system operated. In turn, feelings of resentment and unfairness eroded popular support for such initiatives. We should learn our lesson about too narrowly targeting basic supports. As tempting as it is to argue for special attention to the youngest and poorest children, such a strategy may backfire and actually reduce popular support for programs and policies aimed at combating extreme poverty early in childhood.

What is the alternative? Expansion of child care subsidies and the Earned Income Tax Credit that offers real support to families until they reach the zone of a "livable family income," which is approximately 200 percent of the poverty line. (The poverty line was $12,803 for a family of three in 1997.) This approach will help many more families with children and will also increase the constituency for programs that can serve both the extremely poor and the even greater number of Americans who live in poverty and near poverty. This larger constituency will also be able to point to solid research showing that helping low-income families with children to get by financially is one of the best investments our nation can make to strengthen families and improve the long-term prospects for our children's healthy growth and development.

Publications of Note

This column highlights recent publications recommended for program administrators and policymakers by the Center's program staff and librarian. ***Documents should be ordered directly from the indicated publisher or distributor.***

- **America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 1997**, by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. Nine experts representing federal agencies which collect data on children offer 25 indicators with which to gauge child well-being. Their goals are to create a range of annual data, easily understood by many audiences, drawn from national surveys and vital records, to reflect children's needs for better care and services, improve existing measures, and highlight information gaps. The authors note each indicator's significance for understanding the condition of children, overall trends, and important subgroup differences. The indicators are grouped into several broad categories. (1) Economic security includes child poverty and family income, food security, housing problems, parental employment, and health insurance. (2) Health data include prenatal care, mortality, low birthweight, immunization, chronic health conditions, and teen births. (3) Behavior and social environment statistics cover cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use, and youth crime. (4) Education indicators cover children in non English-speaking households; preschooling, reading exposure and proficiency; school completion; and "detached youth" (adolescents who are neither in school nor working). The report calls for more indicators to monitor preschoolers' social, intellectual, and emotional development and experience of long-term poverty, and reflect the influence of neighborhood environment. It raises questions about how to better predict future well-being, and cites the inadequacy of child abuse and neglect and violent juvenile crime data. (1997, 99 pp.; Free)
  Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. Distributed by National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse, 2070 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 450, Vienna, VA 22182; (703) 356-1964/Fax (703) 821-2098/E-mail: nmchc@circsol.com/Web: www.cdc.gov/nchswww/about/otheract/children/child.htm

- **Child poverty and deprivation in the industrialized countries, 1945–1995**, edited by Sheldon Danziger and Giovanni Andrea Cornia. This volume documents how the United States lags behind other developed countries and even some emerging nations on indicators of child well-being. Sponsored by UNICEF, the study shows U.S. child poverty, compared to 25 years ago, is at a higher level and more widespread than in most other wealthy nations. The authors attribute this phenomenon to stalled growth in living standards, soaring marital instability and out-of-wedlock childbearing, reduced spending on social programs, rising inequality in labor market incomes, and a less progressive federal income tax. They suggest that the superpower arms race contributed to reduced U.S. spending on social programs for children. Other industrialized countries, they say, have also experienced these problems, but, for a variety of reasons, their levels of child well-being remain the same or higher, except for Russia: e.g., Japan has a tradition of egalitarian income distribution and strong intergenerational family ties; Sweden and Italy have rising child well-being indicators because of increased public spending and labor market policies. The editors offer a generic anti-poverty strategy to improve child well-being across all countries: better monitor child poverty; reduce economic hardship for workers while permitting greater employer flexibility; increase social safety-net programs for children and families; subsidize basic services such as health care and housing; and create stronger family and community support policies. (1997, 448 pp.; $85 + p/h)
  Oxford University Press, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513; (800) 451-7556/Fax (919) 677-1303.

- **Early childhood care and education: An investment that works**, by Shelly L. Smith, Mary Fairchild, and Scott Groginsky. This updated edition outlines the long-term value of early childhood education for society. It details how state legislatures incorporate early education research findings into public policies. The last decade has seen legislative bills relating to early childhood increase from 28 to over 120 with states appropriating over $2 billion annually. Recent trends include: integrating child policies with other social goals, such as economic development and state restructuring; passing benchmarks to measure outcomes of state programs, and giving early childhood education funding priority; increasing the supply of quality low-income child care; expanding programs for at-risk four-year olds; improving academic achievement in public school by expanding early care programs; using the public school system to meet the social service needs of community families; and passing home visiting and early intervention programs to reduce later criminal involvement. Some states are implementing Head Start-like health requirements, recognizing the link between early environmental stimulation and later brain function, enhancing program regulation for quality, and recognizing that school readiness and child care are important ingredients in successful welfare to work programs. Many state family support programs are a joint undertaking of legislative and executive branches and combine early intervention, parent education, and other social services to improve at-risk family functioning before crises erupt. (1997,107 pp.; $25 + $4 p/h)
  National Conference of State Legislatures, 1560 Broadway, Suite 700, Denver, CO 80202; (303) 830-2054/Fax (303) 863-8003

- **Indicators of children's well-being**, edited by Robert M. Hauser, Brett V. Brown, and William R. Prosser. This report reflects the work of a series of conferences to formulate indicators of children's well-being to evaluate the effectiveness of the many new programs for young children and their families living in poverty. The 39 authors represent a wide range of experts in child development, sociology, adolescent health, population studies, and public policy. Each assesses, within their respective fields, the current status of child indicators, sources of data, the units of existing indicators, and the long- and short-term requirements to develop a more comprehensive set of indicators. Included are indicators of physical health, education, economic security, family and neighborhood conditions, and social development and problem behavior. The authors address how this information is currently analyzed, what the findings reveal, and how the process of measurement can be made more comprehensive and relevant to policy. In formulating a standard set of indicators of child well-being, the authors suggest several criteria: age-appropriateness; comprehensive, understandable to layman, reflecting both positive and negative outcomes, consistent over time, and forward looking. They discuss how existing national surveys can be refined to meet these criteria and how administrative data such as human services records and child welfare and juvenile court statistics can be used more effectively. (1997, 508 pp.; $75 plus $3.50 p/h)
  Russell Sage Foundation, c/o CUP Services, P.O. Box 6525, 750 Cascadilla Street, Ithaca, NY 14851; (800) 666-2211/Fax (800)688-287/E-mail: orderbook@cupserv.org/Web: epn.org/sage/html

- **Investing in our children: What we know and don't know about the costs and benefits of early childhood interventions**, by Lynn A. Daroly, Peter W. Greenwood, Susan S. Everingham, Jill Hoube, M. Rebecca Kilburn, C. Peter Rydell, Matthew Sanders, and James Chiesa. A child's early developmental period can be a critical intervention period for vulnerable children. This report assesses the impact of nine early childhood programs, using indicators of child development, educational achievement, economic well-being, and health status. The study addresses two overarching questions about early intervention programs targeted at disadvantaged children: (1) Do they benefit participating children and their families? and (2) Do they alleviate government expenditures on welfare, criminal justice, and other systems? The authors found the early intervention group compared with the control group showed: (1) improved parent-child relationships and gains in emotional and cognitive development for the child; (2) reduced levels of criminal activity; (3) improvements in some health-related indicators, child abuse, maternal reproductive health, and substance abuse; and (4) gains in economic self sufficiency for the parent and greater labor force participation and higher income for the child. Broader program benefits include lower numbers of welfare recipients; less involvement with the criminal justice system; less time spent in special education; and increased tax revenue and economic security when these children become adults. The study estimates government savings of $3,000 to $24,000. The authors call for more research on implementing these programs on a larger scale; targeting programs to those most in need; selecting program models to replicate; and gauging the effects of changing welfare systems. (1998, 159 pp., $15.00 + $3.00 p/h prepaid)
RAND Corporation, Attn: Distribution Services, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138; (310) 451-7002/Fax (310) 451-6915/E-mail: order@rand.org/Web: www.rand.org

- **KIDS COUNT data book: State profiles of child well-being**, by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The 1998 edition of this annual report centers on how to make quality child care accessible for low-income families. With the increase in dual-income families and the push to send welfare recipients to work, the report asserts, the demand for child care has greatly increased. By the year 2000, it predicts 70 percent of women with preschool-age children will be working and $120 billion a year will be spent to provide needed child care. To be of high quality, this care must provide: (1) a safe and healthy learning environment; (2) parent involvement; (3) training and support for care providers; and (4) continuity of care. In addition to the yearly ranking of states by ten indicators that measure child well-being (i.e. low birthweight; infant and child mortality; teen births, deaths, and dropouts; juvenile violent crime arrests; child poverty; and single-parent families), this volume includes the following statistics concerning child care: (1) percentages of children under age six and ages 6–12 living with working parents, and children under age 13 living in low-income families with working parents; and (2) median hourly wages of child care workers and preschool teachers compared to those of all workers. (1998, 184 pp.; free)
Annie E. Casey Foundation, Attn: KIDS COUNT data book, 701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202; (410) 223-2890/Fax (410) 337-8539/Web: www.aecf.org/kc1998/toc.htm

- **Poverty matters: The cost of child poverty in America**, by Arloc Sherman. The cost of child poverty, argues the author, builds from negative effects on the individual to adversely impact all of society; the economic cost of child poverty affects taxpayers, schools, consumers, hospitals, insurers, social services, and business. He projects that $130 billion will be lost each year through diminished economic output and reduced productivity of the future workforce if present high child poverty rates continue (one in five children in 1996). Countering traditional beliefs, the book includes data to show that poverty rather than living in a single-parent home, puts children at a greater risk of falling behind in school, having adverse health status, and earning less money when they grow up. A poor child is also less likely to survive its first birthday than a baby born to an unwed mother, a high school dropout, or a mother who smoked during pregnancy. Vignettes of real-life experiences humanize the data. The author calls for reducing poverty's cost by encouraging private-sector employers to pay wages that can support families; expanding education and training opportunities and counting them as allowable welfare activity; investing in affordable quality child care; increasing the minimum wage in stages and supplementing earnings to help sustain families until their income rises above the poverty line; ending government programs that discourage marriage; adding child support assurance systems to child support enforcement programs; and expanding the child tax credit. A government safety net will still be needed for those children whose families can no longer be helped under new welfare law regulations. (1997, 43 pp.; $6.95 including p/h)
Children's Defense Fund, 25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 662-3652/Fax (202) 662-3510/Web: www.childrensdefense.org

Center News Briefs

Note from the Editor: This issue of News and Issues *features a redesigned name plate and page layout. We hope you find it more readable and welcome your comments.*

- The Center announces the redesign and expansion of its web site: **cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/**. The media, policymakers, practitioners, advocates, and others concerned about young child poverty can now view text and acrobat (PDF) files of the latest NCCP reports and media releases; maps, tables, and charts from NCCP publications; full text of NCCP fact sheets and speech reprints; and information about NCCP program activities and staff. The site is being updated frequently and user feedback is invited.

- NCCP has begun a five-year project with Abt Associates, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to conduct the National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families which will examine how federal and state child care policies are implemented on the local level and their implications for parents' selection of child care, with particular attention paid to license-exempt family child care and relative care in 25 communities in 17 states.

- The Communications Unit gained two new members recently. **Jamie Hickner**, communications associate, brings her experience in media, public relations, and outreach from Carnegie Corporation of New York; she also taught communications at a South Bronx middle school through the Teach for America program and has a M.A. in English. **Martha Garvey**, new administrative aide, had a long tenure at the Admissions Office at Columbia University Psychoanalytic Center. She is also an English literature major at Columbia School of General Studies.

Publications available from the National Center for Children in Poverty

NEW

- ☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 1998 Edition.** J. Knitzer and S. Page. This new edition updates and expands information provided in the 1996 edition of this report on state initiatives to address the multiple needs of young children and families. Added for 1998 is information on whether states are implementing explicit strategies to link welfare reform with children's initiatives, additional state-by-state indicators of young child and family well-being, young-child-related state welfare provisions, and income-promoting supports to low-income families. *Report*. (1998). 208 pp. **$19.95. March 1996** *Map and Track* Report. 171 pp. **$19.95. Special pricing:** 1996 and 1998 *Map and Track* Editions **$29.95**; both reports and June 1997 *Map and Track (Fatherhood)* **$39.95**.
- ☐ **Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update, March 1998 Edition.** J. Li and N. Bennett. Figures and tables profile extremely poor, poor, and near poor population of young children under age six and their families in the U.S. using official federal government poverty measure based on Census Bureau's Current Population Survey 1996 data. Uses an alternative measure to provide new insights into the impact of programs and policies on the economic well-being of young children. Examines why the young child poverty rate (YCPR) has decreased between 1993 and 1996. *Report*. (1998). 12 pp. **$5.00**.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED — Partial Listing

- ☐ **Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites.** Summarizes strategies and activities undertaken by the 14 Starting Points sites established as an outgrowth of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Outlines overall themes and lessons for policymakers, advocates, and others concerned with the well-being of very young children and their families. *Report*. (1997). 52 pp. **$5.00**.
- ☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood.** J. Knitzer and S. Bernard with E. Brenner and V. Gadsden. Tracks national and state demographic trends on father absence and single-father families. Maps how states are responding to the new demographic realities with strategies to promote fathers as both economic providers and nurturers. Includes maps, charts, and descriptions of 50 state initiatives, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. *Report*. (1997). 180 pp. **$19.95**.
- ☐ **A Study of Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland.** A. Collins and J. Li. Analyzes the regulated low-income child care markets in two states using administrative data on programs in each state's child care resource and referral database, female labor force participation, and poverty rates to understand how government policies influence the supply of child care. *Report*. (1997). 32 pp. **$5.00**.

Issue Briefs on Children and Welfare Reform: (1997) **$5.00** each.

- ☐ **Issue Brief 1: How Welfare Reform Can Help or Hurt Children.** A. Collins and J. L. Aber. Describes the research base for NCCP's framework to assess welfare changes from a children's perspective. Points to lessons from current and welfare-to-work evaluations. (1997). 12 pp.
- ☐ **Issue Brief 2: Anticipating the Effects of Federal and State Welfare Changes on Systems that Serve Children.** A. Collins. Focuses on processes to assess how federal and state welfare initiatives will impact state and community policies and systems that serve children and families. (1997). 12 pp.
- ☐ **Issue Brief 3: The New Welfare Law and Vulnerable Families: Implications for Child Welfare/Child Protection Systems.** J. Knitzer and S. Bernard. Examines the potential impact of P.L. 104-193 on vulnerable families already in or at risk of entering child welfare/child protection systems. (1997). 20 pp.
- ☐ **Lessons from the Field: Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs.** H. Yoshikawa and J. Knitzer. Describes promising strategies generated by Head Start programs to better meet the changing mental health needs of Head Start children, families, and staff. Designed to stimulate dialogue about difficult issues , and to spur collaboration between the mental health and Head Start communities and others working with low-income families. *Report*. (1997). 103 pp. **$15.95** ($9.95 Head Start/Child Care programs).
- ☐ **One in Four: America's Youngest Poor.** A statistical profile of the six million children under age six in poverty in the United States. Includes data on several factors that are associated with young child poverty, including family structures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, parental education levels and employment statuses. Includes young child poverty rates for each of the 50 states and for the 12 largest U.S. cities, as well as maps, charts, and tables. *Report*. (1996). 88 pp. **$16.95**. *Abridged Version* 32 pp. **$7.95**.
- ☐ **Building Bright Futures: An Annotated Bibliography on Substance Abuse Prevention for Families with Young Children.** C. Oshinsky and B. Goodman with T. Woods and M. Rosenswieg. Provides a representative selection of materials to help Head Start and other early childhood programs and organizations strengthen families and enable communities to organize to prevent substance abuse. (1996). 52 pp. **$8.00**.
- ☐ **State Welfare Waiver Evaluations: Will They Increase Our Understanding of the Impact of Welfare Reform on Children?** A. Collins and J. L. Aber. Examines how well evaluations of 21 state welfare reform initiatives address the needs of children as well as their parents. *Working Paper*. (1996). 37 pp. **$10.00**.
- ☐ **Children and Welfare Reform: Highlights from Recent Research.** A. Collins, S. Jones, and H. Bloom. Summarizes studies on how children in low-income families may be affected by changes in welfare eligibility and processes. *Research Highlights*. (1996). 68 pp. **$10.00**.
- ☐ **Young Children in Poverty: An Annotated Bibliography of Books and Reports.** C. Oshinsky. Describes reports, monographs, and special journal issues concerning children and families in poverty; social welfare policies and programs; early childhood care and education; family and community support; child and family health; and comprehensive services. (1995). 80 pp. **$12.00**.

Resource Briefs on Case Management in Service Integration: (1995) **$5.00** each

- ☐ **Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration.**
- ☐ **Working with Clients: Case Management in Service Integration.**
- ☐ **Preparation, Staff Development, and Supervision of Case Managers.**
- ☐ **Managing Case Managers: Case Management in Service Integration.**

(Note: All four briefs may be ordered for $15.00.)

- ☐ **Strategies for Promoting Health and Assuring Access to Health Care in Child Care Settings.** K. Bell. Examines ways that early childhood programs can link up with health services for preschool children. Cites programs in nine states. *Working Paper*. (1995). 28 pp. **$8.00**.
- ☐ **Case Management In Service Integration: An Annotated Bibliography.** E. Marks, K. Maurer, and L. Simkin. Reviews case manager functions and descriptions of case management operations. (1994). 36 pp. **$6.00**.
- ☐ **In the Neighborhood: Programs That Strengthen Family Day Care for Low-Income Families.** M. Larner. Analyzes strategies used to support family day care providers in low-income communities. Includes 10 case studies. *Monograph*. (1994). 96 pp. **$12.95**.
- ☐ **Urban Poverty Database Inventory.** Annotates 160 databases and summarizes research in child/adolescent development, health, education, psychology, and sociology. Co-publishers: Social Science Research Council and Child Trends. *Report*. (1992). 380 pp. **$35.00**.
- ☐ **Integrating Services Integration: An Overview of Initiatives, Issues, and Possibilities.** A. Kahn and S. Kamerman. Cites service integration initiatives that deliver interagency, comprehensive services to low-income families and children. *Working Paper*. (1992). 48 pp. **$10.00**.
- ☐ **Alive and Well? A Research and Policy Review of Health Programs for Poor Young Children.** L. V. Klerman. Reviews the extent of health problems among young children in poverty, and discusses policy/program approaches to solutions. *Monograph*. (1991). 132 pp. **$11.95**.
- ☐ **Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820–1965.** E. D. Cahan. Describes 19th- and 20th-century infant and child care programs and education services. *Monograph*. (1989). 60 pp. **$7.95**.
- ☐ **Case Management In Service Integration: A Concept Paper.** E. Marks. Describes the framework for current field-based research that documents how case management works in various settings. (1994). 32 pp. **$8.00**.
- ☐ **The Role of Local Churches in Promoting Child Health: Lessons from Research and Practice.** K. Bell. Reports on the Ecumenical Child Health Project in Connecticut, New Mexico, and Texas. *Resource Brief*. (1995). 8 pp. **$5.00**.

Prices include postage and handling. ***Prepayment or a purchase order required.*** *Please make checks payable to Columbia University and mail to NCCP or fax your purchase order to (212) 544-4200 or 544-4201 or e-mail to nccp@columbia.edu.*

Columbia School of Public Health

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News & Issues

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health Columbia University

Identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate, and to improve the life chances of the millions of young children still living in poverty

Child Poverty in Many States Takes A Turn (Mostly for the Worse)

Eight states experienced steep increases of more than 20 percent in their young child poverty rates (YCPR) over the past two decades, but over the same time period, only two states—New Jersey and Vermont—saw their YCPRs fall significantly.

A disproportionate share of the national increase in the number of poor young children occurred in the nation's three most populous states—California, New York, and Texas.

These findings are presented in *Young Child Poverty in the States—Wide Variation and Significant Change*, the first installment of a new NCCP series, Early Childhood Poverty Research Briefs, designed to explore the causes and consequences of young child poverty as well as identify and critically examine promising strategies to reduce its incidence. Co-authors Neil G. Bennett, NCCP director of demographic research and analysis, and Jiali Li, associate research scientist, found the number of poor children under age six in California, New York, and Texas increased by two-thirds between the period 1979–1983 and 1992–1996—from an average of 1.2 million to an average of 2.0 million. Over the same period, the number of poor young children in the U.S. grew from an average of 4.4 million to an average of 5.9 million. The national YCPR increased by 12 percent during the same time frame, from 22.0 to 24.7 percent.

While California, New York, and Texas experienced increases of 24, 21, and 24 percent, respectively, in their young child poverty rates in the last 20 years, five smaller states, Oklahoma, Montana, Arizona, West Virginia, and Louisiana, experienced even sharper rises in YCPRs, ranging from 40 percent to 53 percent in the same time period.

(continued on page 2)

Welfare Law Changes Put Fathers Back in the Family Picture

Just as research is confirming the critical role fathers play in nurturing their children and providing economic support, federal changes in welfare law are giving states an opportunity to make fatherhood part of their welfare reform agendas. A new issue brief from NCCP, *Responsible Fatherhood and Welfare: How States Can Use the New Law to Help Children*, details how provisions in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRA) and the Balanced Budget Act of 1996 (BBA) can be used to involve low-income fathers in the lives of their children both financially and emotionally.

The fourth publication in the Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief series, the report updates and expands on the information presented in NCCP's 1997 study: *Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood*, which gives a state-by-state account of activities to encourage responsible fatherhood and offers a framework for states to look at their fatherhood-related programs.

(continued on page 3)

Child Poverty in Many States *(continued from page 1)*

Overall, the YCPR increased by more than 20 percent in 15 states and fell by more than 20 percent in five states, but, says Dr. Li, "Because of small sample sizes in many of these states, the trends are statistically significant in only ten states. Furthermore, we combined the five most recent years of income data (1992–1996) from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and compared it with five years of baseline data from 1979–1983 in order to increase the statistical reliability of our state poverty estimates."

Three Factors Contributed to Increase in Child Poverty Rates

The researchers attributed some of the wide variations in state child poverty trends to three variables: family structure, parental education, and parental employment. "Our research raises a red flag for anyone who thinks that our high rate of young child poverty can be explained by a single demographic factor," says Dr. Bennett.

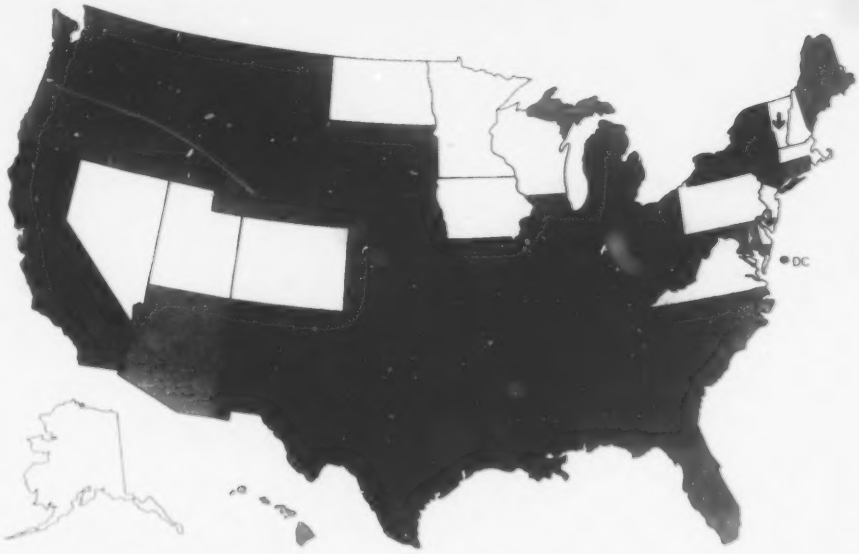
Indeed, the researchers found that a median of 30 percent of the change in the young child poverty rate could be explained by changes in these three factors combined. The report notes that immigration is also an important factor in the growth of family poverty in the largest states. NCCP plans to collaborate with other researchers over the next year to examine these demographic factors in greater depth and to explore the impact of state and federal policies on young child poverty rates.

Preventing Child Poverty Linked to Welfare Reform's Success

The study was released in July after a key deadline in the 1996 federal welfare overhaul was missed. Beginning in 1998, each of the 50 states is required to provide annually a current estimate of its child poverty rate to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the terms of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996; if the rate increases by 5 percent or more and the increase can be attributed to welfare reform, the state is required to submit a corrective action plan to the federal government. In late May, states were notified not to submit their child poverty rates, but to await the official estimates currently being developed by the Census Bureau. "Congress and the President were absolutely right to require that state child poverty rates be tracked as part of welfare reform," asserts Dr. Larry Aber, director of NCCP. "But it would be absolutely wrong for any elected official to declare welfare reform a success without knowing its impact on child poverty," he adds.

"Our report offers some preliminary insights into state child poverty trends," says Dr. Bennett. "As researchers develop a clearer picture of what is behind these divergent state trends, it will help us address young child poverty more effectively as a nation." With the publication of this first research brief, NCCP hopes to focus greater attention on young child poverty within individual states and also help to encourage a "race to the top" among the states to find the most effective strategies to prevent young child poverty. ■

Poverty rates of children under age six, by state, 1992–1996



- States with poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate [15]
- States with poverty rates similar to the national rate [28]
- States with poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate [8]
- ↑ States where poverty rates increased significantly between 1979–1983 and 1992–1996 [8]
- ↓ States where poverty rates decreased significantly between 1979–1983 and 1992–1996 [2]

States with significant positive or negative changes in percentage of children under age six in poverty, 1979–1983 to 1992–1996

State	1979–1983		1992–1996		% Change in rate	Change in number
	Rate	Number	Rate	Number		
U.S.A.	*22.04*	*4,420,791*	*24.67*	*5,877,075*	*12*	*1,456,284*
OKLAHOMA	20.94	54,643	32.03	92,384	53	37,741
MONTANA	17.22	14,626	25.95	20,019	51	5,393
ARIZONA	19.76	49,025	28.89	124,350	46	75,325
WEST VIRGINIA	27.65	48,739	39.99	47,962	45	-777
LOUISIANA	29.14	133,557	40.65	158,447	40	24,890
TEXAS	24.39	358,482	30.27	572,180	24	213,698
CALIFORNIA	23.40	516,759	28.97	950,269	24	433,510
NEW YORK	23.75	338,754	28.76	464,551	21	125,797
NEW JERSEY	20.88	119,125	15.37	107,412	-26	-11,713
VERMONT	21.91	10,754	13.31	7,521	-39	-3,233

Welfare Law Changes (continued from page 1)

Helping Fathers Economically

The issue brief, prepared by NCCP program associate Stanley Bernard, points to several ways states can use new federal legislation to increase family income while encouraging responsible fatherhood. For example, the BBA provisions explicitly allow states to use newly available Welfare-to-Work (WtW) program funds to provide employment and training to unemployed noncustodial fathers of children receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Under previous law, states would have to acquire a federal waiver in order to extend training services to nonresident fathers.

States can also use the opportunities in the child support distribution laws to increase the amount of child support received by TANF families. This can be done in two ways:

- *Increasing the amount of child support pass-through to families.* Since the new law allows states to set the level of child support distributed to families receiving TANF, states can raise the amount above the standard $50 set under the previous welfare program—Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Under AFDC families receiving welfare would get the first $50 of collected child support and the remaining collection would go to reimburse the state and the federal government for the assistance paid that month. This practice was called the $50 pass-through.
- *Implementing the "families-first" distribution scheme, which gives families no longer receiving TANF priority in receiving child support arrears.* Under the AFDC system, if unpaid child support accumulated before the family was accepted into the welfare program or after the family left the program, the state and federal governments were reimbursed before the family received any of the collected support. Under the new "families-first" policy, beginning October 1, 1998, accumulated child support can be paid to the family first, before the state and federal governments are reimbursed.

Key Provisions in the PRA Related to Fathers

The preamble to the PRA states that responsible fatherhood and motherhood are central to the healthy growth and development of children. The following four provisions in the PRA seek to promote responsible fatherhood.

- *Increasing child support enforcement.* The new federal law increases the level of expected child support enforcement and paternity establishment by the states.
- *Eliminating barriers to employment.* The PRA, as amended by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, allows states to use Welfare-to-Work funds for noncustodial parents of children whose custodial parents are TANF recipients with specified barriers to employment and who are long-term welfare recipients or are at risk of reaching their lifetime limits.
- *Reducing out-of-wedlock births.* Congress included a provision in the new welfare block grant program to reward states that reduce the number of out-of-wedlock births and develop new approaches to prevent out-of-wedlock childbearing without increasing the number of abortions. An annual amount of $100 million has been set aside to reward states for their efforts. Up to five states per year are eligible for a maximum of $20 million ($25 million if fewer than five states qualify) annually.
- *Increasing access and visitation for noncustodial parents.* A pool of $10 million in grants is available to states for the development of access and visitation programs to increase the involvement of noncustodial/nonresident parents in the lives of their children.

Keeping Fathers Present

Federal legislation also encourages states to foster family stability. For cases where the father is already in the home, the PRA allows states to provide TANF assistance to families where both parents are present based on the household income.

When the father is not in the home, the PRA gives states new latitude to shape the definitions of "family" and "unemployed" and, subsequently, the requirements for TANF eligibility. Since each state can define what constitutes a family, theoretically, a state can acknowledge the nonresident father's presence by including him as part of the family unit. This practice will also make nonresident fathers eligible for employment training, subsidized employment, and activities that promote personal development which are offered to other TANF recipients.

States can also encourage fathers to be involved by enhancing access and visitation programs. States can apply for federal grants to develop and expand programs that provide parents in conflict with counseling, mediation, or other services to lessen the stress of divorce on children. Such programs can also offer a supervised and protective environment where children in families with a history of domestic violence can maintain contact with the father.

Evaluations Are Lacking

Unfortunately, the new law does not give the states any incentive to evaluate or monitor the impact of the changes in child support enforcement and other laws designed to modify parental behaviors. Until there are systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of both liberal and strict provisions in the law, their efficacy will be unknown. Yet, says Mr. Bernard, "we know that children whose fathers are positively involved with them tend to do better; and fathers who do not live with their children, but who are able to play a nurturing, caring role with them, are more likely to provide economic support as well."

The recent attention to fathers underlines the two integral and related roles they can play in promoting their children's well-being: (1) they provide for their children economically to ensure that basic needs are met, and (2) they provide children with a safe and nurturing environment while working with other caregivers and institutions to help children grow to healthy adulthood. Earlier Children and Welfare Reform Issue Briefs laid out a framework to show how welfare reform can affect children—by affecting family income, parenting styles and levels of parental stress, and the quality of services that children receive. "Welfare reform efforts that consider fathers' value to the family as it relates to each of these issues," says Bernard, "can help states build an agenda for children that acknowledges the broad range of children's needs and makes responsible fatherhood central to state agendas for children." ■

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POLICY POINT OF VIEW

Not Just a U.S. Problem: Other Industrialized Nations Confront Child Poverty*

by Giovanni Andrea Cornia and Sheldon Danziger

The living standards and social well-being of children throughout the industrialized world improved remarkably between the end of World War II and the mid-1970s. However, child welfare is now at a turning point, most clearly in Eastern Europe, but also in the West. While economic and social progress continues in many domains in many countries, deteriorations in social safety nets have emerged. Uncertainties about the future of the welfare state that has helped protect children and families from the vicissitudes of the economy in the past 50 years raise concerns that the beginning of the 21st century may represent an era of retrogression and inequality.

Damaging Economic and Political Changes

Changes in the global economic environment, especially technological changes, have reduced the demand for less-skilled workers and increased economic hardships. In addition, there are important economic and political effects of the collapse of communism. Its most immediate effect was a severe recession and social crisis in Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union that have lowered living standards, increased inequality, and reduced children's well-being quite dramatically.

In the advanced Western economies, including the United States, the ramifications of these events are still working themselves through the international economic and political systems. Communism's demise has already contributed to political system changes (as in Italy), recessionary trade shocks (as in countries such as Finland that were heavily dependent on trade with the Soviet bloc), frictional unemployment increases associated with reductions in military expenditures (as in California, resulting from decreases in defense contracting and military personnel), and large fiscal effects entailing increased taxes and declining real wages (as in Germany, where huge subsidies were required to integrate the former East German economy and to support large numbers of migrants and refugees from beyond the former Iron Curtain).

The fall of communism has also undermined public support for governments in general and social policies in particular. Critics of the social welfare state have equated it ideologically with the failed socialist state and have

photo by Peter Storrie

photo by Gregory Fox Photography

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Sheldon Danziger is Henry J. Meyer Collegiate Professor of Social Work and Public Policy at the University of Michigan and author of America Unequal.

challenged the credibility of policies that rely on the state, rather than the market, to promote social needs.

We do not defend the status quo in welfare states. Indeed, we believe that the welfare state in some countries should become more market-oriented. Nonetheless, the sharp decline in living standards and the rapid increase in poverty in the East following the demise of communism demonstrates that market mechanisms cannot, on their own, alleviate poverty.

Public Expenditures for Children Eroding

In the first 25 years following World War II, a combination of government income transfers, labor market policies, and social policies regarding public health, education, and child care combined with rapid economic growth to dramatically reduce child poverty in most industrialized countries. Since the early 1970s, however, there has been a slowdown in the rate of growth of public expenditure for children, as well as benefit erosion, increasing selectivity, and growing policy biases in favor of other social groups. For example, even Sweden is under pressure to reduce public spending. Its low levels of poverty and inequality are due primarily to its activist labor market policies and generous welfare state programs; but in a period of globalization and technological change, these policies have become too expensive.

Given the broad variations across the industrialized countries of the East and West in economic conditions, the nature of the welfare state, societal norms, and ideological orientations, there are no universal lessons that can be applied in all countries to reduce child poverty. What is feasible in Sweden may be ideologically impracticable in the U.S. and economically impossible in Russia. Therefore, we suggest several key policy agendas for industrialized countries.

* This point of view is based on the introduction to *Child Poverty and Deprivation in the Industrialized Countries, 1945–1995*, which the authors coedited for Oxford University Press in 1997.

- ***Use labor market policies to promote employment.*** Much of the recent increase in the child poverty rate is due to technological changes that have reduced the demand for less-skilled relative to more-skilled workers and to the increased globalization of the market economies. These changes caused rising unemployment in many high-wage European countries, especially those with less flexible labor market institutions (e.g., France and Germany) and increased work at low wages in economies with less labor protection and more wage flexibility (such as the U.S.).

  As a result, most children in low-income families have parents who can not be expected to earn enough to keep their families out of poverty. Thus, active labor market policies are needed to augment the skills of the long-term unemployed, to encourage employment in the private sector, and to create jobs of last resort when structural unemployment is high. Some countries might increase the minimum wage, whereas others need more flexibility in their labor market institutions.
- ***Strengthen social safety nets.*** Remarkable progress has been made in most industrialized countries over the last fifty years in the areas of old-age pensions and unemployment compensation. In contrast, implementation of child and family policies has been less complete. In many countries this has contributed to dramatic declines in the birth rate, with the number of people under 20 years of age falling below that of the elderly. Life-cycle events like divorce, birth, or illness of a child are typically associated with a high risk of falling into poverty. Benefits promoting child well-being, such as paid maternity leave, child allowance, ensured child support, and free health care are either non-existent, means-tested, or insufficient in amount.
- ***Change taxation policies.*** Many countries need to formulate or preserve a comprehensive social welfare policy for children and families. The necessary resources can be obtained by reordering public spending priorities, and in countries where recent tax changes have been regressive and income inequality has increased, through higher taxation of the rich and initiating Earned Income Tax Credit programs for low-income families. In several of the formerly centrally-planned economies, this requires the establishment or redesign of the entire system of taxation.
- ***Enhance child support policies.*** In an era of increased divorce and out-of-wedlock child-bearing, there is also great need for increased private transfers from absent parents (usually fathers) to the custodial parent because, in most countries, single-mother families are among the poorest groups.

Reducing Child Poverty Will Be Complex

If these policies are to be successfully implemented, families, employers, unions, and governments must all be prepared to make changes. Families must be willing to work in the market to support their children, and to maintain this support even when marriage status and living arrangements change. Employers must be willing to assume some training costs and to support flexible labor markets and family benefits. In Western Europe, trade unions must be willing to be more flexible in wage negotiations. Governments must be willing to provide basic health care, education, and preschool services, employment-related services such as job training and retraining, and job search, and family leave. Governments must also adopt tax policies that do not discourage employment, and which, when combined with safety-net benefits, do not yield cumulative tax rates that unduly reduce incentives to work.

Even though most advanced economies have experienced similar changes in family structure and in the structure of labor markets during the past two decades, their child poverty rates vary dramatically, from less than 3 percent in Finland to more than 20 percent in the U.S. Differences in public policies and employment rates account for a significant portion of this variation. Our analysis suggests that these differences reflect differing social and political values and choices, not technical economic constraints. There are enough choices that can be made so that all modern advanced countries and eventually the transitional economies of Eastern Europe can achieve both dynamic, growing economies and lower child poverty rates. ■

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News and Issues, Summer/Fall 1998, Vol. 8, No. 2 Carole Oshinsky, Editor

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The Changing Role of Low-Income Fathers

Using a Public Health Model to Guide Social Policy

by David Cohen

Editor's Note: The author, a Harkness Fellow of the Commonwealth Fund of New York, and a British journalist, has been a resident scholar at NCCP this year.

Does becoming a more active father—taking financial responsibility for one's children *and* making emotional connections—change a man? Society can easily conceive of men changing for the worse—after all, jails are filled with men. It is less common, but no less important, to ask whether men can change for the better.

There are two major, but contradictory, trends in fatherhood in the 1990s: father absence and father involvement. In the mind of the public, the shift towards father involvement is a middle-class phenomenon, whereas low-income fathers are cast as deadbeat, absent, and feckless.

New evidence from the U.S. Census Bureau, however, suggests otherwise. In 1993:

- Poor fathers were almost twice as likely as non-poor fathers to care for their preschoolers while their wives worked, 43 percent versus 24 percent respectively.
- Blue collar fathers and fathers in service occupations, such as maintenance, police, fire fighting, and security were more than twice as likely as managerial/professional fathers to look after their children while their wives worked, 42 percent versus 18 percent.

One explanation for these findings is that many low-income families work split-shifts to get by. While for some fathers, taking up the role of child caregiver may be a conscious choice, for many it is borne out of economic necessity; caring for one's child has simply become part of what many low-income dads do.

The broader context for these findings is a rising tide of father involvement across class. The total number of fathers providing child care in 1993 increased by 5–10 percentage points over 1988. What is more, individual fathers are spending more hours doing it. A 1997 Families and Work Institute study found that working men in dual-income families are spending 2.3 hours a day with their children, up from 1.8 hours in 1977; (for working women the corresponding figure is 3 hours a day, down from 3.3 hours).

A Qualitative Shift in the Code of Manhood

The personal interviews I conducted with low-income fathers reveal that many have made profound shifts from lives that involved womanizing, crime, and being absent from their children to becoming employed, law-abiding citizens and involved fathers. These fathers (see profiles) oversee homework when they get home and juggle work and family commitments, putting a high priority on their children. They claim that embracing fatherhood was one of the key factors that helped them make the transition from the criminalized margins of society to the mainstream.

What caused them to change? The answer is complex, but peer pressure is a factor. In the ghetto and the barrio, it is increasingly disrespected for men to disown responsibility for their children. Subtly, and ever so slowly, we seem to be witnessing a shift in the code of manhood.

These individual profiles provide evidence that men can change for the better. But how representative are they? Does the trend to involved fatherhood carry enough momentum to significantly impact society? I have tried to apply a public health model, used to explain epidemics, to assess how close we are to the "tipping point" where involved fatherhood moves from the margins of society to the mainstream.

Applying Tipping Point and Diffusion Theories

Epidemiologists explain that every medical epidemic has its "tipping point," the point at which a disease changes from a stable phenomenon into a public health crisis. Epidemic theory has been used to assess social facts like crime reduction in the 1990s, and "white flight" in the 1970s. For example, social scientists found that racist white neighborhoods emptied out when the African-American influx reached just 5 percent; in more liberal neighborhoods, white flight only occurred at 45 percent. In the second neighborhood, the relationship between whites leaving and African-Americans arriving was linear at first, and became exponential when the African-American influx reached 45 percent. Conversely, when attempts are made to try and turn neighborhoods around, little change occurs until the threshold is reached, then the change is immediate and massive. Tipping point theory suggests that the curve of social change is not linear but exponential.

What if this theory could be used to think about the creeping influence of involved fatherhood? At what point in time might it leap instead of creep?

Profile: *Ben Middleton* *Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, New York*

Ben Middleton recalls the night his wife, Mary, gave birth to their son: "I got back to my flat in the Bronx about five in the morning and there was a message from my mother on the answer machine. She was saying: 'Where are you, Ben? Mary's in the hospital, you have a son, where are you?'" Middleton had spent the night having sex with another woman. If this was an inauspicious beginning to family life, it got worse: when a former girlfriend fell into financial trouble, Middleton left to help her out, returning 18 months later. His wife took him back, but he continued with his recidivist lifestyle of drugs, extramarital sex, and minor crime. Today, Middleton, 44, walks his 10-year-old son, Benjamin III, to school (avoiding the drug dealers who congregate on their corner), is there to oversee his homework when he returns in the afternoon, juggles work and family commitments, and has left behind his life of drugs, womanizing, and crime.

In thinking about this question, a key difference between medical epidemics and social shifts must be borne in mind: with a medical epidemic, the agents of change are germs, with a social shift, the agent of change—of innovation—is word of mouth, often encouraged by mass media. Diffusion of Innovation Theory offers an explanation of how word of mouth is passed in society. It segments society into five ideal types: (1) a small group of **risk-taking innovators** launch the new idea; (2) the **early adopters**, usually opinion leaders, serve as role models and are significant beyond their 10-20 percent of society; (3) **the early majority** (33 percent) deliberate for a long time and are often less wealthy than the innovators and early adopters; (4) **the late majority**, also about one third of society, take on an innovation out of economic necessity or sustained peer pressure; and (5) **the laggards** are traditionalists who resist innovation even when it is in their own best interests. Usually, the tipping point lies between the early adopters and the early majority. Once the tipping point is breached, the idea becomes mainstream.

Applying this theory to the social shift to involved fatherhood, two distinct stages can be identified. In the 1980s, the very existence of working men who were also involved fathers was parodied and ridiculed, first as the fanciful invention of advertisers, second as men whose masculinity was doubted. These men were the early innovators.

In the mid-1990s, however, it became more difficult to doubt the existence of the involved father. He showed up in serious demographic research: the rise of the single-father household, the househusband, the working dad who is the primary child caregiver while his wife works, and the dad spending more time with his children than previous generations.

Moving from Marginal to Mainstream

Today, we appear to be at the critical stage—the winning over of part of the early majority. In 1998, about 70 percent of working fathers *say* they would like to spend less time at work and more time with their families compared to 12 percent in 1977. Research shows that success in work and success in family life—and resolving the tension between them—are the foremost concerns of married men. Three-quarters of fathers who live with their children say they prefer a daddy-track to a fast-track job. Taking men at their word, the aspiration to involved fatherhood appears to have tipped from marginal to mainstream. Critics might argue that many fathers are only saying what is socially acceptable. But the fact that "involved fatherhood" has become politically correct is itself a huge statement and evidence of a profound shift in the code of manhood.

Profile: ***Louis Ramos*** *Brooklyn, New York*

Louis Ramos is a Latino man with a once violent temper. He adopted the one-year-old son of his girlfriend when the father was shot dead in a jewel heist. At first, he was "not ready" to be a dad, but has since grown inseparable from the boy, now age eight. Last year, after his son's best friend was killed in crossfire outside their Brooklyn apartment, Ramos gave up his job and his home and, together with the boy's mother, moved back to Puerto Rico so that their son could grow up in a more positive environment.

Profile: ***Terrell Bishop*** *Los Angeles, California*

Terrell Bishop was an "OG homie" (original gangster homeboy) who ran with the Kitchen Crips. Kitchen is a ghetto central neighborhood in south LA and Bishop was "gang-bangin', drug-dealin', and shootin' people" from the age of 12. By the time he turned 22, he hadn't been out of jail more than six months at a stretch and had established his reputation as head of the Kitchen Crips. Bishop fathered five children, with four different mothers, none of whom he married. Eight years later, Bishop is a successful businessman, an involved father, and a surrogate father to kids in the community. The unusual aspect to Bishop's journey to respectability is that his identity as "dad" has been core. He was one of the founders of Mad-Dads in LA, a now-nationwide group of dads, 45,000 strong in 40 cities, who patrol the streets of their own neighborhoods, armed with nothing more than a torch and a two-way radio, to keep them clean from drug-pushers, pimps, prostitutes, and gangsters, acting as surrogate parents for children of the community and protecting them from the kind of person Bishop used to be.

Harder indicators of behavior (as opposed to mere aspirations) look at the increased number of fathers who actually provide physical child care for their children. For example, single-father households—which now amount to 2.1 million and comprise 19 percent of all single-parent households—are the fastest growing family type today. At least 20 percent of custodial fathers are making a large, measurable commitment to the care of their child. These calculations take no account of the significant number of married fathers with non-working wives who take on child care in the evening or on weekends.

The reliability of these statistics is often debated, but what is incontrovertible is that they indicate a large gap between the aspirations and behavior of working fathers. For policymakers, this mismatch between aspirations and behavior should signal a clear political opportunity.

However, current social policy focuses on absent fathers with only lip service paid to involved fathers. State initiatives typically involve taking the stick to deadbeat dads (e.g., by vigorously enforcing child support awards) or providing programs to connect noncustodial fathers, for example, teenage or incarcerated fathers, with their children. Custodial fathers in intact (though often fragile) families who are attempting to balance work and family are virtually ignored.

There are two compelling reasons for bringing custodial fathers into the framework. (1) Many disconnected dads were once involved fathers; an attempt to understand and lessen the pressures on custodial working fathers could reduce the numbers of absent fathers society has to contend with further down the line. (2) If social policy were to tackle the practical stumbling blocks that are preventing working fathers from acting on their aspirations, the reward-risk ratio could be huge. As we approach the tipping point, a small shift in social policy can go a long way to breach the threshold of social change.

Public Policy Can Lower Tipping Point

Public policy can help lower the tipping point by ensuring that the people who adopt the desired behavior are rewarded and not punished. The combination of sanctions

(continued on page 8)

Center News Briefs

- The latest publication in the *Children and Welfare Reform* issue brief series is devoted to child care for low-income families provided by friends and relatives. These caregivers are often used by families of all income levels, and especially those with young children or those receiving welfare benefits to enable them to be employed or to take advantage of training opportunities. ***Child Care by Kith and Kin—Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children*** makes recommendations that states and local communities can use to reach out directly to these child care providers and the children for whom they care. It summarizes the research on kith and kin child care, examines traditional policies, and describes eight innovative program strategies.
- **Ayana Douglas-Hall** joined the program and policy unit recently to be field coordinator for the National Low-Income Child Care Study NCCP is jointly conducting with Abt Associates. She will also work to strengthen the Center's focus on community-based perspectives. As an analyst with the New York City Department of Health, she monitored all health-related legislative items on the local and state level, and helped set the Department's regulatory agenda. She is a graduate of Vassar College and has a Masters in Public Health from Emory University.
- The Administration Unit welcomes **Mariah Quish** as grants manager. Previously, she assisted with grants at the United Jewish Appeal—Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York and at the Mutual of New York Foundation, and interned at the Children's Defense Fund. She has a Masters in Public Policy and Administration from Columbia University with a concentration in not-for-profit financial management, and is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College.
- NCCP bids farewell to **Stephanie Jones**, research associate in child development, and congratulates her on being accepted into Yale University to pursue a doctorate in developmental psychology. **Joshua Brown**, research associate, will continue to coordinate work on the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) but will add other child development research projects to his portfolio. **Kelly Mathew**, new research assistant for developmental research, will work under Mr. Brown's supervision on two studies: (1) the Adolescent Pathways Project to analyze neighborhood and community influence on family processes and youth development, and (2) the Barnard College Toddler Center study, to examine the socio-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and their parents. A recent graduate of Cornell University, she did research on emotional regulation and mother-child interactions of low-income toddlers in Cornell's Department of Human Development and Family Studies.
- The Center hosted Anna Gassman-Pines, a senior at Yale University, to work on two projects for the center this summer: (1) checking background data gathered for the Low-Income Child Care Study and creating tables and graphs by topic and by individual states for a future report on the current U.S. child care situation, and (2) preparing a literature review on informal child care for the center's *Highlights from Recent Research* series.

The Changing Role of Low-Income Fathers *(continued from page 7)*

and rewards affects the ease with which individuals maintain the behavior of involved fatherhood once it has been adopted. Social policy can play a part in rewarding involved fathers, or at least removing the obstacles that they encounter. For example, under prior welfare laws low-income families were penalized financially for father involvement, causing some fathers to go underground; in addition, young couples having children had no incentive to marry.

Today the welfare laws have been changed so as not to penalize families with non-absent fathers, although the implementation challenges remain. Other important obstacles to involved fatherhood are in the work place. Some corporations have realized that projecting an image as "father/family-friendly" is an effective recruitment strategy and a smart way of maintaining employee loyalty. But on the whole, there is resistance among corporations to allowing male employees the same kind of flexibility in work-family balancing as working mothers.

This is the double bind that men who opt for the daddy-track encounter. The problem is that the benefits of father involvement accrue primarily to the state—they pay less child support, social problems are reduced—whereas the costs accrue to private corporations (the costs of paternity leave, men who leave work to mind sick children, men taking career breaks). It is still an uphill struggle to convince most corporations that they will benefit long term from employees with a happy home life. States could ease the burden on employers; they could pass on some of the social savings from involved fatherhood to corporations by offering corporations incentives to adopt "pro-family" policies. If they do, a significant obstacle to working fathers acting on their aspirations will have been removed, the tipping point may be breached, and the working father could become as mainstream a figure on the domestic landscape as the working mother. ■

Publications available from the National Center for Children in Poverty

NEW

☐ Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief 5: Child Care by Kith and Kin—Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children. A. Collins and B. Carlson. Summarizes the research on kith and kin child care, examines traditional policies, describes eight innovative program strategies, and makes recommendations that states and local communities can use to reach out directly to these child care providers and the children for whom they care. (1998). 20 pp. **$5.00**.

☐ Early Childhood Poverty Research Brief 1: Young Child Poverty in the States—Wide Variation and Significant Change. N. Bennett and J. Li. Describes the considerable variation among the states' young child poverty rates and suggests that changes in three demographic factors—family structure, employment patterns, and educational attainment—account for almost one-third of the changes over the last two decades. These findings are important in light of the states' obligation to monitor their child poverty rates under current welfare law and to submit corrective action plans if rates have increased by more than 5 percent from the previous year. (July 1998). 16 pp. **$5.00**.

☐ Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief 4: Responsible Fatherhood and Welfare: How States Can Use the New Law to Help Children. S. Bernard. This issue brief outlines the provisions in the welfare law that are related to fatherhood and offers states strategies to encourage responsible parenting by custodial and noncustodial fathers. (1998). 24 pp. **$5.00**.

☐ Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 1998 Edition. J. Knitzer and S. Page. This new edition updates and expands information provided in the 1996 edition of this report on state initiatives to address the multiple needs of young children and families. Added for 1998 is information on whether states are implementing explicit strategies to link welfare reform with children's initiatives, additional state-by-state indicators of young child and family well-being, young child-related state welfare provisions, and income-promoting supports to low-income families. *Report*. (1998). 208 pp. **$19.95**. March 1996 *Map and Track* Report. 171 pp. **$19.95. Special pricing:** 1996 and 1998 *Map and Track* Editions **$29.95**; both reports and June 1997 *Map and Track (Fatherhood)* **$39.95**.

☐ Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update, March 1998 Edition. J. Li and N. Bennett. Figures and tables profile extremely poor, poor, and near poor population of young children under age six and their families in the U.S. using official federal government poverty measure based on Census Bureau's Current Population Survey 1996 data. Uses an alternative measure to provide new insights into the impact of programs and policies on the economic well-being of young children. Examines why the young child poverty rate (YCPR) has decreased between 1993 and 1996. *Report*. (1998). 12 pp. **$5.00**.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED — Partial Listing

☐ Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites. Summarizes strategies and activities undertaken by the 14 Starting Points sites established as an outgrowth of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Outlines overall themes and lessons for policymakers, advocates, and others concerned with the well-being of very young children and their families. *Report*. (1997). 52 pp. **$5.00**.

☐ Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood. J. Knitzer and S. Bernard with E. Brenner and V. Gadsden. Tracks national and state demographic trends on father absence and single father families. Maps how states are responding to the new demographic realities with strategies to promote fathers as both economic providers and nurturers. Includes descriptions of 50 state initiatives, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. *Report*. (1997). 180 pp. **$19.95**.

☐ A Study of Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland. A. Collins and J. Li. Analyzes the regulated low-income child care markets in two states using administrative data on programs in each state's child care resource and referral database, female labor force participation, and poverty rates to understand how government policies influence the supply of child care. *Report*. (1997). 32 pp. **$5.00**.

Issue Briefs on Children and Welfare Reform: (1997) **$5.00** each / **4 for $15.00**.

☐ Issue Brief 1: How Welfare Reform Can Help or Hurt Children

☐ Issue Brief 2: Anticipating the Effects of Federal and State Welfare Changes on Systems that Serve Children

☐ Issue Brief 3: The New Welfare Law and Vulnerable Families: Implications for Child Welfare/Child Protection Systems

☐ Lessons from the Field: Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs. H. Yoshikawa and J. Knitzer. Describes promising strategies generated by Head Start programs to better meet the changing mental health needs of Head Start children, families, and staff. Designed to stimulate dialogue about difficult issues, and to spur collaboration between the mental health and Head Start communities and others working with low-income families. *Report*. (1997). 103 pp. **$15.95** ($9.95 Head Start/Child Care programs).

☐ One in Four: America's Youngest Poor. A statistical profile of the six million children under age six in poverty in the United States. Includes data on several factors that are associated with young child poverty, including family structures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, parental education levels and employment statuses. Includes young child poverty rates for each of the 50 states and for the 12 largest U.S. cities, as well as maps, charts, and tables. *Report*. (1996). 88 pp. **$16.95**. *Abridged Version* 32 pp. **$7.95**.

☐ Building Bright Futures: An Annotated Bibliography on Substance Abuse Prevention for Families with Young Children. C. Oshinsky and B. Goodman with T. Woods and M. Rosensweig. Provides a representative selection of materials to help Head Start and other early childhood programs and organizations strengthen families and enable communities to organize to prevent substance abuse. (1996). 52 pp. **$8.00**.

☐ State Welfare Waiver Evaluations: Will They Increase Our Understanding of the Impact of Welfare Reform on Children? A. Collins and J. L. Aber. Examines how well evaluations of 21 state welfare reform initiatives address the needs of children as well as their parents. *Working Paper*. (1996). 37 pp. **$10.00**.

☐ Children and Welfare Reform: Highlights from Recent Research. A. Collins, S. Jones, and H. Bloom. Summarizes studies on how children in low-income families may be affected by changes in welfare eligibility and processes. *Research Highlights*. (1996). 68 pp. **$10.00**.

☐ Young Children in Poverty: An Annotated Bibliography of Books and Reports. C. Oshinsky. Describes reports, monographs, and special journal issues concerning children and families in poverty; social welfare policies and programs; early childhood care and education; family and community support; child and family health; and comprehensive services. (1995). 80 pp. **$12.00**.

Resource Briefs on Case Management in Service Integration: (1995) **$5.00** each / **4 for $15.00**

☐ Who Are Case Managers and What Do They Do? Case Management in Service Integration

☐ Working with Clients: Case Management in Service Integration

☐ Preparation, Staff Development, and Supervision of Case Managers

☐ Managing Case Managers: Case Management in Service Integration

☐ Strategies for Promoting Health and Assuring Access to Health Care in Child Care Settings. K. Bell. Examines ways that early childhood programs can link up with health services for preschool children. Cites programs in nine states. *Working Paper*. (1995). 28 pp. **$8.00**.

☐ Case Management In Service Integration: An Annotated Bibliography. E. Marx, K. Maurer, and L. Simkin. Reviews case manager functions and descriptions of case management operations. (1994). 36 pp. **$6.00**.

☐ In the Neighborhood: Programs That Strengthen Family Day Care for Low-Income Families. M. Larner. Analyzes strategies used to support family day care providers in low-income communities. Includes 10 case studies. *Monograph*. (1994). 96 pp. **$12.95**.

☐ Alive and Well? A Research and Policy Review of Health Programs for Poor Young Children. L. V. Klerman. Reviews the extent of health problems among young children in poverty, and discusses policy/program approaches to solutions. *Monograph*. (1991). 132 pp. **$11.95**.

☐ The Role of Local Churches in Promoting Child Health: Lessons from Research and Practice. K. Bell. Reports on the Ecumenical Child Health Project in Connecticut, New Mexico, and Texas. *Resource Brief*. (1995). 8 pp. **$5.00**.

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Publications of Note

This column highlights recent publications recommended for program administrators and policymakers by the Center's program staff and librarian. ***Documents should be ordered directly from the indicated publisher or distributor.***

- **Characteristics of children's early care and education programs: Data from the 1995 National Household Education Survey**, by Sandra L. Hofferth, Kimberlee A. Shauman, Robin R. Henke, and Jerry West. This report focuses on early childhood care and education for children under age six who were not yet enrolled in kindergarten. Several key issues are addressed including: (1) whether at-risk children were less likely to be enrolled in education programs or nonparental care arrangements that emphasize child development; (2) where did parents get information about available child care and did cost reflect quality; and (3) what were parents' preferences and did they get what they wanted. The data used for the study is based on interviews with parents and does not reflect the viewpoint of child care providers. In 1995, 59 percent of preschool children were in one or more types of regular nonparental child care arrangements; 28 percent were in full-time nonparental child care arrangements. The authors note that infants who are cared for in more than one nonparental child care arrangement may not form the necessary attachments that facilitate positive development. This study found that infants were rarely in multiple nonparental child care arrangements, but children at risk were more likely to be placed in this situation than other children. (June 1998, 160 pp. NCES 98-128/GPO No. 065-000-01157-3; Free while supplies last from ED Pubs and NEDRC or $14 from GPO)
  National Center for Education Statistics. Distributed by Education Publications Center (ED Pubs), P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398; (877) 433-7827/Fax (301) 470-1244/E-mail: EdPubOrders@aspensys.com or National Education Data Resource Center (NEDRC), Attn: NEDRC Publication Request, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208-5650; (703) 845-3151/E-mail: nedrc@pcci.com or Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office (GPO), P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954; (202) 512-1800/Fax for credit card orders (202) 512-2250

- **Neighborhood child care: Family, friends, and neighbors talk about caring for other people's children**, by Toni Porter. To fill in the large gaps in knowledge about child care by family, friends, and neighbors (also known as "informal" child care and "kith and kin" child care), the researcher conducted six focus groups with Latina and African-American women in two Bronx and one Brooklyn, New York neighborhood. The 45 women interviewed were relatives (42%), neighbors (35%), and friends (22%). They discussed how arrangements began and ended, their motivations for caring for children, the role of payment, the hours that care was offered, and identified supports that they would find helpful. Two-thirds of the caregivers cared for only one or two children and most had offered to help or responded to requests for help from parents. Only two of the 45 women said they had actively sought out families looking for care. Many of the women said that caregiving was gratifying; they enjoyed watching children grow and learn; and they felt good about helping out the parents. Fewer than half of the caregivers, irrespective of their relationship with the child, received payment from parents. The caregivers revealed that they cared for children on a variety of schedules, from day-times, to weekends, evenings, nights, and, in a few cases, for entire week-long periods. Sources of conflict and difficulty tended to concern payment issues and differences in child rearing styles between caregivers and parents. Finally, nearly all of the providers expressed interest in learning more about many aspects of child care, including child development. Some also expressed interest in learning how to become licensed family child care businesses. (1998, 57 pp.; $7.50)
  Center for Family Support, Bank Street College, 610 West 112th Street, Room 614, New York, NY 10025; (212) 875-4546/Fax (212) 875-4547/E-mail: tporter@bnkst.edu

- **New findings on poverty and child health and nutrition: Summary of a research briefing**, edited by Anne Bridgman and Deborah Phillips. This report reviews a recent meeting to explore the links between poverty and child health, to highlight new research and innovative interventions, to garner the attention of federal and state policymakers, and to set a research agenda on the well-being of children and youth in light of shifting government responsibility for welfare and health care. The assembled experts discussed three questions: (1) how do income and poverty affect child and adolescent health? (2) how does nutritional status affect child development? and (3) how are children and youth affected by changing patterns of health insurance coverage? Emphasis was placed on understanding the context in which health care is sought and provided and the role of families in mediating the effects of community and economic factors on child and adolescent health. New data on children's health insurance coverage and on the timing and degree of malnutrition and its interaction with environmental factors was also highlighted. The briefing revealed that states are paying increasing attention to health data when making policy decisions, but they face many challenges: the lack of researchers to analyze and interpret data; obtaining data from private medical providers and linking it to public data systems; improving indicator and outcome measures, especially for special-needs children, minorities, and immigrant children; comparing child health across states and tracking children when they move; standardizing nutritional status measurements; releasing public records faster and insuring research funding; and bringing states and communities together to improve access to health care and research data. Participants called for more focus on the health of children living in low-income families and the factors and strengths families and communities have that can protect child health. (1998, 64 pp.; $15, $12 for Web orders)
  Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. National Academy Press, Box 285, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20055; (800) 624-6242/Fax (202) 334-2451/Web: www.nap.edu/bookstore

- **New research findings on the effects of the Earned Income Tax Credit**, by Robert Greenstein and Isaac Shapiro. In response to the recognized lack of income gains among poor families over the last decade, this report examines recent research on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)—one policy vehicle for improving the finances of low-income families that has received bipartisan support in the states. Using as a backdrop the history of the EITC program, the authors highlight positive recent research findings. EITC has been found to substantially increase work effort among single mothers and significantly reduce poverty, especially among children. This government benefit program, say the authors, has lifted more children out of poverty than any other. In 1996, it moved 4.6 million people out of poverty, 2.4 million of whom were children. It also may have contributed to expanding the workforce of single mothers with children between 1984-1996. Most criticism of the program is aimed at the high error rate, but the authors point out efforts to control this such as requiring parents to submit social security numbers for all of their children. (March 1998, 24 pp., Publication No. 98-022; $7)

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 408-1080/Fax (202) 408-1056/ Web: www.cbpp.org/pubs/fedtax.htm

- **Parenting behavior in a sample of young mothers in poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study**, edited by Martha J. Zaslow and Carolyn A. Eldred. This study examines the parenting behavior of mothers who participated in the New Chance initiative, a program model designed to improve the economic and overall well-being of low-income young mothers—specifically mothers who had dropped out of high school and were at risk for long-term welfare receipt. New Chance aims to help these mothers acquire the necessary educational and vocational skills to find and keep jobs and to motivate them to postpone further childbearing and improve their parenting skills while furthering the healthy development of their children. Through home-based videotaped sessions of mother-child interactions the researchers assessed: (1) the common characteristics of family background that are related to parenting behaviors; (2) whether New Chance positively affected parenting behavior and, if so, how; (3) how parenting behavior affects the development of children; and (4) how family economics and the mothers' psychological well-being influence child development. Researchers conclude that programs like New Chance can have a positive impact when they include parenting education and social support for the mothers and motivate participants to improve their life circumstances and parenting behavior. Mothers' participation in job training and internships also seemed to have indirect positive affects on their children. New Chance participants are encouraged to work in positions that offer variety, stimulation, and advancement. These employment characteristics, say the authors, can translate into more interactive parenting, and reduce mothers use of obedience training with their children, but further research on two-generation interventions is needed to help identify more clearly which program components have positive influences on high risk mothers and their children. (April 1998, 381 pp.; $18 + $3 p/h, Executive Summary $4)
Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 16 East 34 Street, New York, NY 10016; (212) 532-3200/Fax (212) 684-0832/Web: www.mdrc.org/

- **Protecting children from abuse and neglect**, edited by Mary Larner. This special journal issue contains articles which focus on the role of Child Protection Services (CPS) in aiding children affected by abuse and neglect. The number of reports to CPS of suspected child maltreatment has tripled in the past 20 years. In 1995, nearly 1 million child victims of abuse or neglect were identified, but limited agency resources meant that not all received assistance. According to the expert authors, caseworkers are the pulse of decision making for children suffering from abuse and neglect, yet fewer than one third hold social work degrees, and, in 1995, their average salary was $33,000. The authors trace the history of CPS, the extent and impact of child abuse and neglect, the role of family support services and foster care, and the role of welfare reform provisions. They suggest that changes must be made both within and outside of the CPS system to help these children. Policy and program changes they recommend to promote these children's well-being include: mobilizing informal community resources; expanding prevention and treatment avenues; strengthening government efforts to reduce poverty through employment training and drug treatment programs; and increasing parenting education. (Spring 1998, *The Future of Children*, Volume 8, No. 1, pp. 1-141; free)
Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Attn: Circulation Department, 300 Second Street, Suite 102, Los Altos, CA 94022; (415) 948-3696/Fax (415) 948-6498/ Web: www.futureofchildren.org/

- **Revising the poverty measure**, by the Institute for Research on Poverty. Since the 1960s, the U.S. has been using a method to measure poverty based on the cost of buying a minimally nutritious diet for a family multiplied by three, adjusted only for inflation. Only pretax income and cash public assistance are used to determine whether a family falls below the poverty line set by this method. Various forms of near-cash income and taxes are omitted from the total dollar figure. How poverty is measured and what it means to be economically poor have important ramifications for welfare recipients, government programs, social policy, and the well-being of children and their families. This newsletter issue summarizes the choices needing to be made, technical issues, and the potential effects of introducing the new poverty measure recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel study in 1995. The articles are based on published and unpublished papers, reports, and books by experts involved with the project: Implementing New Measures of American Poverty, which aims to provide a research background for making the difficult ethical and political decisions that will need to be made in order to revise the way poverty is measured. Topics include how to improve the measure, definitions that need clarifying, (e.g., income, non-cash income, disposable income, economic poverty), experimental examples of implementing the NAS recommended measure, how to determine household resources (e.g., cost and spending for health care and housing), and geographic variations. What it means subjectively to be poor and research into the feasibility of measuring it are also described. The social welfare program changes in New Zealand during the last 15 years provide a natural laboratory to study social policy changes that affect poverty levels. A summary table lists all research in federal agencies related to the measurement of income and poverty. (Spring 1998, *Focus*, Volume 19, Number 2, pp. 1-62; free)
Institute for Research on Poverty, Attn: Publications, 1180 Observatory Drive, Madison, WI 53706; (608) 262-6358/Fax (608) 265-3119/Web: www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/

- **What welfare recipients and the fathers of their children are saying about welfare reform: A report on 15 focus group discussions in Baltimore, Boston, and Chicago**, by Linda Burton, Andrew J. Cherlin, Judith Francis, Robin Jarrett, James Quane, Constance Williams, and N. Michelle Stem Cook. This report summarizes the work of 15 focus group interviews to assess the viewpoints and understanding of the new welfare laws by welfare recipients and the fathers of their children. Participants were drawn from three major cities with poor or working-class neighborhoods that are part of a larger "Three City Study" to assess the impact of welfare reform. The participants represented current recipients, past recipients, and a small number who had never participated in any welfare programs. Nearly all participants knew about the time limits provisions and felt positively about them as long as the recipient's needs were considered. However, they did not know the details of the new programs and state variations. Participants expressed positive and negative responses to the impact of TANF: they liked the increased personal responsibility but feared it would lead to increased crime and family hardships propelled by overcrowded housing and the need to secure basic needs when time limits run out. To improve TANF, the participants recommended increasing transition time from welfare to work, child care opportunities, assistance in education and job training, medical coverage, and help in learning English. With these supports available from the government, the participants felt they could realize their work goals. (June 1998, 23 pp.; free)
Johns Hopkins University, Department of Sociology, Baltimore, MD 21218; (410) 516-7626/Fax (410) 516-7590/E-mail: welfare@jhu.edu/ Web: www.jhu.edu/~welfare

Should we continue sending you this newsletter?

Dear Colleague:

Due to increased printing and mailing costs, the National Center for Children in Poverty is in the process of updating its mailing list for newsletters, publications, press releases, and other materials you or your organization receive from us. Many of these items are now on our Internet Web site at **http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/dept/nccp/**

Please let us know if you wish to remain on our mailing list and, if so, if there are corrections needed.

Please respond to this request by October 15. After that date, we will begin to remove names from the mailing list. You may mail this page to: NCCP, Attention Publications Survey, 154 Haven Avenue, New York, NY 10032-1180 or fax it to: (212) 544-4200 or 544-4201.

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- ☐ Child Health
- ☐ Children & Families Under Stress (violence, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse & neglect)
- ☐ Demographics/statistics
- ☐ Early Childhood Education
- ☐ Early Childhood Mental Health
- ☐ Family Support/Child Welfare
- ☐ Fatherhood
- ☐ General Early Childhood
- ☐ Head Start
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